

CARNEGIE INSTITUTION OF WASHINGTON,  
DEPARTMENT OF TERRESTRIAL MAGNETISM,  
STANDARDIZING MAGNETIC OBSERVATORY  
5241 Broad Branch Drive, NW  
Washington, D.C.

HOER NO. 80 52 A

HAER  
DC  
WASH,  
579A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

CARNEGIE INSTITUTION OF WASHINGTON,  
DEPARTMENT OF TERRESTRIAL MAGNETISM,  
STANDARDIZING MAGNETIC OBSERVATORY

HAER  
DC  
WASH,  
579A-

HAER No. DC-52-A

Location: 5241 Broad Branch Drive, NW  
Washington, D.C.

Date of Construction: 1914

Present Owner: Carnegie Institution of Washington

Present Use: Demolished

Significance: The Carnegie Institution of Washington, with funds provided by industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, established the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism (DTM) in 1904 to survey and measure the earth's magnetic fields. The Standardizing Magnetic Observatory (SMO) building, used for testing measuring instruments (galvanometers, earth inductors, and magnetometers, for example), was designed by the well-known Washington, D.C., architect Waddy Wood who also designed the DTM's adjacent headquarters and laboratory building. Nonferrous materials were used for the buildings' nails, fasteners, gutters, and other metal components. The outside dimensions of the wood-frame structure measured 58' x 28' with a bay on the east side (21'-6" x 9'-6") and an entrance vestibule on the west side (13'-6" x 10'-0"). Fourteen piers, extending from the foundation to above the floor, served as mounts for the magnetic measuring instruments that were tested by DTM scientists and technicians. Only one of these piers survived prior to demolition of the SMO building in 1988. (For more information see Researches of the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism, Volume II: Land Magnetic Observations, 1911-1913, and Reports on Special Researches [Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1915], 185-88 & 199-200.

~~STANDARDIZING MAGNETIC OBSERVATORY~~  
HAER No. DC-52-A (page 2)

Historian: Gray Fitzsimons, 1988.

Project Information: This photographic project was initiated by the HAER Washington, D.C., office prior to the demolition of the Standardizing Magnetic Observatory. Jet Lowe took the large-format photographs and Gray Fitzsimons prepared the photo captions. HAER would like to thank Shaun J. Hardy, Librarian, Carnegie Institution of Washington, for providing information on the buildings associated with the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism.